Virtually all aspects of political campaigns have been dramatically changed as the result of the Internet. For example, citizens can now access news about campaigns whenever and wherever they find it convenient, including in-depth, insider information that was previously available only to die-hard political insiders. Because of the increased importance of this campaign communications medium, the Internet has had an effect on how citizens learn about, view, and interact with campaigns and candidates. Social media gives citizens the opportunity to stay current with what their favorite are doing and offer their support, monetary or otherwise. Citizens can directly and rapidly affect the course of a campaign, by posting videos that are subsequently viewed by large numbers of people online and sometimes covered by traditional news organizations. The same holds true in some few cases with forwarded emails. Bloggers, who are often ordinary citizens, are now considered to be “journalists,” with access to the campaign, and whose posts can also affect the campaign. Campaign organizations now put considerable effort into social media, online fundraising, outreach programs, organization and mobilization efforts.

This overview does not exhaust the ways in which the Internet is used by campaigns, organizations, and citizens, to cover, engage in, interact with, and so on, presidential campaigns, and how these interactions may have a reciprocal effect. The point is that the online campaign has now evolved into an extensive, sophisticated, and integral part of presidential electioneering. However, in spite of the fact that the foregoing are now all considered to be standard fare, it is inevitable that in 2016 coverage of various aspects of the campaigns will be expanded, campaigns themselves will develop and employ new methods of outreach and persuasion.

This special issue of Social Science Computer Review will be devoted to the continued evolution of the Internet’s role in political campaigns. This is the second time we (I am an associate editor of the journal) have dedicated an issue to this topic, the first being in 2012.

While much of the focus will be on the presidential campaign, articles that focus on sub-presidential politics will be welcomed, especially if it can be argued that what is seen in the sub-presidential campaign(s) in question reflect a larger trend. Although the natural focus of an issue devoted to a presidential election will be on politics, manuscripts from all social science disciplines will be welcomed.
It is anticipated that this special issue will be published in December of 2017, although many manuscripts will be published much earlier in Sage Online First.

Proposals (2-3 paragraphs) can be emailed to <baumgartnerjo@ecu.edu> by March 1, 2016. If accepted, completed manuscripts will be due on January 1, 2017. Authors will be expected to (blindly) review at least one of the other manuscripts that have been accepted.

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